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INFO RUEHTH/AMEMBASSY ATHENS 8589
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 3707
RUEHDA/AMCONSUL ADANA 2575
RUEHBS/AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS 6335
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RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 6160
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2743
RUEUITH/DET 1 39LG ANKARA TU
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JCS PASS J-5/CDR S. WRIGHT

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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

FRIDAY, JANUARY 4, 2008

In Today's Papers

Blast Kills 5 in Diyarbakir

All papers report an explosion struck a military vehicle in the heart of the mainly Kurdish southeastern city of Diyarbakir on Thursday. Of the five who were killed in the explosion, two were students; of the 110 who were injured, 30 were military personnel. Eight of the injuries are serious, which could cause the death toll to rise. The bomb was set off by remote control and targeted a military vehicle carrying 46 personnel. Due to the explosion's proximity to a school, many more children would have been injured or killed if the explosion had occurred five minutes later, according to a teacher. No one claimed responsibility for the explosion, but the A4 explosives used in the blast are known to be used by the PKK. Police have detained 12 suspects.

General Yasar Buyukanit, the chief of the military General Staff, will go to Diyarbakir on Friday to visit the soldiers wounded in the attack. Mainstream Sabah cites Anatolian News Agency sources in reports that Turkish warplanes, soon after the Diyarbakir attack, bombed terrorists camps located in the Gabar and Kupeli mountains.

After the blast, President Abdullah Gul and Prime Minister Erdogan reaffirmed their determination to eliminate the PKK. "Once again terrorism shows its ugly face," said Gul. Prime Minister Erdogan stressed that "Turkey will continue to fight terrorism with determination."

Turkey's mainly Kurdish political party DTP issued a statement condemning the attack, which said the attack took place at a time when there is need for peace around the country. The DTP also tasked a delegation of parliamentarians and deputy chairmen to conduct an investigation in Diyarbakir. The Mayor of Diyarbakir, Osman Baydemir, also condemned the attack.

Mainstream Sabah and the Islamist-oriented Zaman say the attack

shows the desperation of the PKK terrorists, who are now heavily bombarded by Turkey's military in northern Iraq. Papers note A-4 explosives were used in the attack, which "turns the eyes to the PKK as the main suspect." Papers reiterate that the PKK had threatened to retaliate against the Turkish operations into northern Iraq. Under the headline, "The 'You Can't Return Home' Bomb," the leftist-intellectual Taraf says the blast has been a response to the AKP government's "return home" project for the PKK militants.

In a related story, all papers report that police have seized a bomb made of 14 kg of C-4 explosives from a car in Bursa, which is just south of Istanbul. One suspect was detained in Bursa. In the eastern city of Van, police found a minibus, parked near the Van castle, with hand grenades, hand-made landmines, and 50 kg of C-4 explosives.

Editorial Commentary on Turkish Domestic Politics, the Country in 2008

Hasan Cemal observes in mainstream Milliyet (1/4): "The opposition CHP does not inspire trust within Turkey. Swiss Professor Erik-Jan Zürcher, an expert on Turkey, says "the CHP is not a left party, but an authoritarian state party. In Turkey, there are no serious alternatives to the ruling party. The AKP appeals to all on the political spectrum, which is not normal. AKP has been considered as a force for democratization in Turkey. I do not see a threat of Islamization in Turkey." Deniz Baykal's CHP has never succeeded in establishing a viable opposition platform. There is not one opposition party who can come forward to say they can manage the economy or unemployment better than the ruling AKP. No opposition party is keen to launch educational and judicial reforms. Instability awaits Turkey's political system if the non-existence of a viable opposition party continues."

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Koray Duzgoren comments in Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak (1/4): "Turkey enters 2008 in a state of war. This cannot continue; there is a lot the government must do to secure peace this year. Reforms must be made to expand freedoms, lift bans, protect minorities, and jump start efforts for EU accession. The AKP has demonstrated attempts to resolve the Kurdish question without talking to Kurds and without attempting democratic and political solutions. 2008 will test the ruling AKP's ability to deal with the Kurdish problem. Turkey does not have any more time to lose."

Turkish Cyprus Leader Talat Visits Ankara

All papers report that on Thursday, President Abdullah Gul received northern Cyprus leader Mehmet Ali Talat. In a joint press conference after the meeting, Gul said he would urge UNSYG Ban Ki-moon to revive the stalled Cyprus peace process. "I will ask the UN to be more active, to start new efforts for a comprehensive solution to the Cyprus problem." Gul said 2008 offered a new opportunity for Cyprus because of Greek Cypriot elections are set for February 17. "We are determined to support a settlement that is acceptable by both parties," said Talat. Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet emphasizes that Talat did not use the term "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus" (TRNC) but said the "Turkish side" while referring to the enclave in the north of the divided island. A commentary in liberal Radikal says that Talat's top-level reception at the presidential palace indicate Ankara's full support for Talat.

Gul's US Trip is not a 'Fast-Food Visit'

Liberal Radikal says President Abdullah Gul will embark on his January visit to the US with Foreign Minister Ali Babacan, Energy Minister Hilmi Guler, Economy Minister Mehmet Simsek, and a high-level military official. US media calls the Gul visit a "fast-food visit," but Ankara insists the timing is perfect since Gul will meet President Bush before his tour of the Middle East, according to Radikal. Islamist-oriented Zaman says Gul will hold separate talks with Secretary Rice and Vice President Dick Cheney before meeting President Bush. Then, Gul will travel to New York to meet UNSYG Ban Ki-Moon and the representatives of the Jewish lobby. Gul will also deliver a speech at the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR).

Editorial Commentary on President Gul's Visit to US

Hasan Mesut Hazar wrote in conservative-nationalist *Turkiye* (1/4): "President Gul's upcoming US visit will be remembered as an historical effort to strengthen bilateral relations. At a White House briefing, spokesman Scott Stanzel announced that Presidents Gul and Bush will discuss Afghanistan, Iraq and Turkey's EU membership. This visit carries great importance because of the timing and the issues to be discussed. The visit will take place at the beginning of 2008, when the international agenda is very intense. The meeting's immediate proximity to Bush's tour of the Middle East indicates Turkey's increased international importance. Prime Minister Erdogan's visit to the White House in November resolved the two countries' prior bilateral problems. Following this meeting, President Bush declared the PKK a common enemy of the US and Turkey. However, Turkey-US relations are not limited to the fight against the PKK. The US is aware of Turkey's strategic importance in the region. Let us all remember that strong US-Turkish relations benefit Turkey, the US, and the Middle East. These relations will promote peace and calm in the region."

TV Highlights

NTV, 7.00 A.M.

Domestic News

- Turkey's electricity price hikes will reach 15 percent for households and 10 percent for industry. When adjusted for inflation, the increases will amount to 19.5 percent for households and 12 percent for industry. The AKP government announced last week

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that it was hiking power prices in response to rising costs.

- Around 100 people in Cukurca in the Hakkari province, on the border with Iraq, have complained to the local governor that they were disturbed by artillery fire in the area.

- On Thursday, parliament approved a sweeping ban on cigarette smoking.

International News

- Israel will deploy more than 10,000 policemen during President Bush's visit next week.

- According to a report from the International Crisis Group, President Musharraf is a "serious liability" to Western efforts to fight against the Islamic extremists in Pakistan.

- At least seven Palestinians have been killed in Israeli ground and air attacks in the Gaza Strip.

WILSON